

JULIET S. KONO

A Sojourner: My Grandmother Shige Ōshita

SHIGE TANIGUCHI ŌSHITA, my grandmother, came to Hawai'i from Hiroshima in 1913 as a picture bride. She married my *Issei* (first generation) grandfather, Bunemon Ōshita, a carpenter, flume-keeper, and independent cane grower who came from Yamaguchi Prefecture. For most of her life she lived in a small, rural, plantation community called Kaiwiki on the Big Island of Hawai'i (fig. 1). Eight miles up-slope and part of the Hāmākua coastline, Kaiwiki overlooks Hilo, the largest town on the island. Like my grandparents, the majority of the people who lived there were independent cane growers for Hilo Sugar Mill.

Throughout her life, my grandmother kept several journals. Only one notebook survives, however, consisting of two parts: the first, minutes of a Japanese women's club; the second, drafts of my grandmother's letters, her recipes, and miscellaneous family accounts. This notebook remained for many years upon a shelf behind my grandmother's bed. She'd been living with my parents in Hilo because of the inability to care for herself. The notebook lay, among other things, with the record book of her death and its long list of *kōden*, the customary monetary gift, *kenka* or flower offerings, and food offerings by family and friends. It should be noted that here in Hawai'i, the *kōden* probably incorporates the different kinds of offerings at a funeral, while in Japan it is usually monetary.

Juliet S. Kono, Honolulu resident and English teacher, is the co-editor of Sister Stew: Fiction and Poetry by Women (1992).

The Hawaiian Journal of History, vol. 26 (1992)



FIG. 1. Sojourner Shige Ōshita,
mid-1930s. (Author's photo
collection.)



FIG. 2. Shige Ōshita, 1968. (Author's photo collection.)

Over the years, and because they were getting old themselves, my parents had been gradually getting rid of things in their house. I took the notebook for myself, wanting some remembrance of the kind and gentle woman I knew as my grandmother (fig. 2). I had no idea what was written in it. No one in my family could easily translate my grandmother's archaic pre-war Japanese characters. But the notebook lay untouched again—this time scattered among my own possessions. It took a house move to bring the notebook back to my attention.

A few months ago I contacted Mutsuyo Okumura, a family friend and free-lance translator of Japanese, and showed her the

notebook. I asked her to do a translation of several sections, as I was especially curious about my grandmother's letters.

When Mutsuyo finally called me back, she was very excited by what she had found. While she wanted more information on parts of the notebook to complete the translation, what was needed to identify various people, dates, and places turned out scanty at best. Even with my mother's help, it was difficult to trace who my grandmother was writing to, the circumstances, and who the people were that she'd been writing about.

From how and what she has written, albeit not very much, my grandmother appears somewhat of a romantic, having a definite poetic streak. My grandmother may have also been a very suppressed writer. Indeed it is true that she was more educated than most women of her generation, having had plans to become a teacher in Japan. But after her father gave her away as a picture bride to my grandfather, her plans never came to fruition. A voracious reader and writer, she wrote scores of letters to family and friends. Some of my aunts have stories about her being frequently admonished by my grandfather because she neglected her housework in order to read and write. While she did sail to Hawai'i, and even lived here for the rest of her life, she was by far a most reluctant bride and immigrant. (See the conclusion: Mutsuyo Okumura, "Notes on Translation.")

As I have stated, the journal consists of two parts. Mutsuyo says that except for the last two entries in December 1941, the notes and minutes do not look as though they were written by my grandmother.

Page one of the journal starts with the names of the "founding members" of a newly organized women's club in Kaiwiki, Hawai'i. Some members, out of the 27 listed, are still recognizable to me—my having heard these names while growing up. Listed here are only those names which have been verified by my mother, listed in the Japanese order, last name first: Yamaguchi Aiko; Sasai Etsuko; Yamashita Fusa; Fukushima Rika; Shigeta Iwa; Eta Tsuneyo; Ōshita Shige; Miyamura Naka; Nekonishi Tora; Kami Matsumi; Sakoda Shikae; Nakamichi Fumie; Motonaga Sakae. Most of these women are now dead, but many of their children still live in the area, which is quite fashionable

today. Cool and having a commanding view of Hilo town and the bay below, the area has escalated in real estate values. Many doctors and lawyers have bought into the place. When my husband and I tried to acquire my grandparents' land a few years ago, largely for sentimental reasons, the owners rejected us firmly due to lucrative and rising land prices.

On December 4, 1937, the women held a preliminary meeting with 20 women in attendance. They decided that:

1. The name of the club shall be Hōmyōji [Temple] Women's Club.
2. The monthly membership fees shall be 10 cents.
3. Names such as President or Vice President shall not be used. Instead, three secretaries shall be elected and they shall take care of all business matters.
4. The term of the secretaries shall be for one year and they shall be chosen by election.
5. Activities shall be discussed by the secretaries. [General] Meetings shall be held at least three times (New Year, May, and September).

The women then held an election. The secretaries elected were Hotta Kima—15 votes; Akiyama Toki—14 votes; Kami Hanayo—12 votes. "Having taken care of the above successfully, we chatted lively over tea and cakes, and finally closed the meeting," say the minutes.

The women held the first official meeting of the club on January 9, 1938, or Showa 13. At this time, "Reverend Sasai gave a lecture, and Mrs. Sasai also gave a lecture." Mutsuyo speculates that the women began the club because of concern over the Sino-Japanese war. On July 7, 1937, in China, in what has been called the Marco Polo Bridge Incident, an exchange of fire occurred between Japanese and Chinese soldiers near Beijing. While deemed a minor incident, a Japanese naval officer was shot in Shanghai soon after. In early November, the Japanese sent a contingent which landed at Hangzhou Bay. Later, peace negotiations collapsed, and the Japanese occupied Nanjing, then the capital. Sometime in January of 1938, the Japanese cabinet declared that

they intended to set up their own regime in occupied China. The early club minutes reflect what had been going on in China:

January 9: . . . Unanimously decided on the club sending care packages to the Imperial Army officers and soldiers at the front due to the Sino-Japan Incident. The budget is [set for] approximately 75 cents per person.

January 16: Prepared care packages. 12 participants. Contents: raisins, pencils, 2 bags of Bull Durham tobacco, cigarettes, towels, socks, loin cloths. Prepared total: 52 bags. Finished at about 1:00.

January 18: Mailed the care packages.

Later in the year, the women involved themselves in other activities as well:

October 2: Regular meeting. Although, attending members were few, they worshipped before the altar, then decided the following in congenial spirit:

1. Hōmyōji Sunday School shall be run by Hōmyōji Women's Club.
2. As one of the club's activities, an Ikebana/Chanoyu Class will be held once a month. . . .

The following year, 1939, appears uneventful although several changes in the ministry of the Kaiwiki temple occur, with Reverends Sasai and Tanaka leaving for other congregations. In 1940, at the suggestion of Reverend Kurohira—a new priest affiliated with the Shingon Sect who came from Honu'apo in Ka'u, the Southern district of the island of Hawai'i—the club established "club rules." As if Reverend Kurohira saw what was imminent, he suggested that the women keep records of their activities. He also insisted that they install regular club officers, instead of the secretaries, and keep records of their monetary transactions. The club members agreed, and the Reverend bought a notebook which probably came from Maeda Store in Kaiwiki, a store affiliated with the sugar mill. This is the notebook that eventually ended up in my grandmother's possession. The club members gathered previous records and recorded them in retrospect. Pages

one through seven were, therefore, written after the inception—at the end of 1940 or beginning of 1941—of the women's club.

Because Reverend Kurohira was busy establishing his new household, the club could not meet every other month toward the end of the year as they had planned. The women held their meetings consecutively, in October, November, and December, instead. At each of these meetings, the Reverend lectured on "the way of women" or "the principles of child-rearing and other topics." (According to Mutsuyo, these were probably lectures on being "patient," "respecting one's husband," and similar topics.)

On January 19, 1941 (Showa 16), the women held a general meeting and New Year's party in conjunction with a regular meeting. They discussed many things, among which they decided to stick to the *status quo*. But one change made was to have the secretaries designated as president, vice president, and so forth. Following the establishment of these new rules, they elected my grandmother as the first president of the club. She had six votes. The minister's wife, Mrs. Kurohira, who was "recommended to be president," declined the nomination "due to housework" and accepted the position of vice president.

Later, the women celebrated with a New Year's Party. They "had an extremely exciting time" with the "festive food made by members"—the "lively" chatting, and "friendly atmosphere" filling the place. They also participated in the entertainment, "such as dances and games practiced under Mrs. Kurohira's coaching," and the women were "ecstatic seeing the splendid results."

Early in April of that same year, Mrs. Yamaguchi, a member of the club, was placed in Hilo Hospital "because of leprosy." My grandmother and Mrs. Kurohira represented the Club and went to visit her. Later, in June, the women received news that another member of the club, Chika Kōchi, was also critically ill from the same disease. The minutes later state that Mrs. Kōchi passed away on July 17, despite "medical treatment." Whether she died of the disease or complications is not revealed; she may have been ill for a very long time. Furthermore, it is not known how soon these women (and if Mrs. Kōchi hadn't died) would have been

transferred to Kalaupapa, the place on Moloka'i island where the government isolated and placed active leprosy patients. For Mrs. Kōchi's funeral, the women offered a large bag or *tawara* of white rice as *kōden* and Mrs. Kurohira read the club's "message of condolence."

The meetings held in August helped to establish more permanent guidelines for the club, which was officially named the Kaiwiki Mikkyō (Esoteric Buddhism) Women's Club. Listed below are but some of the rules they were to abide by:

3. Regular members of the club shall be married women and others who wish to [join the club].
4. The objectives of the club are to foster cooperative spirit, to cultivate women's virtue, to nurture religiousness.
5. The club shall participate in the following activities:
 - a. Assist at meetings in village, temple, school, etc.
 - b. Donate appropriate money/goods to world emergencies.
 - c. Hold various classes.
 - d. Take charge in running the Sunday School and give Christmas gifts to the pupils.
 - e. Attend to other emergencies and those incidents that need [our] assistance.
6. Good and Ill Luck, and Fortunes and Misfortunes:
 - a. The club shall give a gift at the occasion of the birth of the first child of regular members only.
 - b. Officers, representing the club, shall visit regular members who have contracted leprosy.
 - c. The club shall send a message of condolence upon the death of regular members and offer a big bag [*tawara*] of white rice as *kōden*, no matter what the price at the time may be.
 - d. The club shall give one dollar as farewell gift to regular members who move out or go back to their homeland.

The minutes discuss other housekeeping matters of the club and specify the duties of the officers. These rules and regulations were approved on August 24, 1941.

The minutes then speak of a variety of activities that the women participated in during the months of September and October. Most of the activities centered on cooking classes. The

women even invited a Portuguese woman, Mrs. Pavao, to teach them how to make Portuguese sweetbread, a specialty in Hawai'i.

As my mother recalls, two club members came to the Matayoshi Hospital to visit her soon after she had given birth to her first child, my older sister and my grandmother's first grandchild. "To commemorate the birth of Mr. Asayama's first daughter," says the record, "a special donation of \$5.00 was given [to us]" which means that my grandmother gave money (rather than received money as was customary) to the club to help celebrate the birth of her first *mago*, or grandchild.

As the year neared closing, "more than ten families participated in a picnic sponsored by the club. Despite the rain on the previous day, more people came than expected," say the minutes. It appears that the club first planned to go to Coconut Island Park located in Hilo Bay, but the adults didn't care for the location chosen, so they decided to go to another place—"Three Mile' Half," or Onekahakaha Beach Park. In this section, the cost and items that the women-sponsors needed for making ice cones are noted as follows: "Ice \$1.00; sugar 10 pounds; ice cups 85 cents; flavor 25 cents."

These club-sponsored activities generated much enthusiasm and excitement among the members. The members found, for instance, the cooking classes to be very useful, and they showed great interest through their wholehearted participation. The club fostered a sense of community for these immigrant women living in the small village of Kaiwiki. Their enthusiasm, however, was soon devastatingly crushed on December 7, 1941, with the bombing of Pearl Harbor.

The women posted the last entry of the club minutes on December 14—a week after Pearl Harbor. According to the notebook, the "last meeting" of the year, which was scheduled prior, was "an important day," for an "election of officers" was to be held and other activities discussed. But because the War between Japan and the United States had just begun, "meetings with more than ten people" were banned; therefore, the members could not hold their scheduled meeting. Nonetheless, officers of the club did gather to square accounts. They decided to "give five dollars for the materials in the cooking class and \$10 as a farewell

and year-end gift to the teacher.” The total expense: \$15. Moreover, they returned the “balance” to the rest of the members, or 45 cents each.

“As Showa 16 [1941] came to a close, Kaiwiki Women’s club was also banned.”

Because my grandmother had been the first and last president of the club, the notebook remained with her—the thinking being that the club would resume activities, perhaps, after the War.

For the duration of World War II, nothing was written in this notebook. Then drafts of my grandmother’s letters begin to appear right after the last comment of the club minutes. By this time, I believe, all intentions of reviving the club were gone. The world was drastically changed. Some of these women’s sons had been killed in the War, some families had moved, and some of them had even changed religions. For still another reason my grandmother started drafting her letters in this book because she was thrifty by nature and wouldn’t have wanted to waste paper. Then, too, after many years of silence, and not having written anything in Japanese for the longest time, her written Japanese had probably deteriorated from disuse, and she wanted to draft her letters before sending them out.

With the exception of two letters, all of the postcard entries and letters drafted immediately after the War were ones meant for my grandfather’s family. My grandmother, out of deference to her husband’s family, may have wished to display her best form. My mother says that while Araishi Ryūzō, my grandfather’s cousin, may have been illiterate, his wife and family understood written Japanese, and it was probably to them that my grandmother directed her letter writing formalities.

Written sometime at the end of 1946 or the beginning of 1947, the first draft is intended for a postcard, and it was written to my grandfather’s relatives, mainly his Uncle’s family—the Araishis of Wahiawa, O‘ahu:

It is already one year since the end of the war. I am writing to you by postcard which we are now allowed to send. We are wondering how you have all been. Please feel relieved as we are all fine without any ailments. We will be looking forward to hearing from you. Regards.

Matter of fact, cautious but concerned, this first draft is restrained and brief. Although, I was not even born, I can imagine my grandmother's anguish because of the way she always worried about us, the members of her immediate family. While probably bursting with questions at this moment, her tone is merely inquiring. Nevertheless, she gets bolder later. Her restraint lessens in subsequent letters as she inquires more and more about her husband's family here in Hawai'i and Japan. Already, a lighter, more enthusiastic tone emerges in parts of a second postcard draft:

At the beginning of this year, I sent a letter with the help of an interpreter in the service, and received your reply. So everybody is fine and Mitsuko has already gotten married—Congratulations! From now on, please let us know more about how you have been.

Curious, she cannot contain herself and asks that they please let her know about how they were doing. At this point, it sounds as if she had just learned from someone that it was safe to correspond, so she is very happy about the change. I am unsure what my grandmother meant when she says that she “sent a letter with the help of an interpreter in the service.” It may be that a letter was delivered by an “interpreter” to the Araishis during a time letter writing was still banned. A Japanese interpreter could probably travel, and it is possible a letter was remanded to him; whereas an ordinary Japanese person would not have been able to travel at that time.

In a third draft, intended as a letter, my grandmother writes again to Araishi Ryūzō on O'ahu. Written sometime after April 1947, my grandmother thanks Mr. Araishi for asking about them in that “season,” which is a basic and usual salutation in Japanese letters. She then states that they (her family) are fine, and makes a traditional inquiry about how the Araishis are doing during the “changeable season.” As for her family in Hawai'i, she says, they feel “depressed” by it all, because it had been raining “since February. Everybody is complaining about the rain in Hilo—the rain capital of the island.” She adds that they are, nevertheless, “all in good health and those who go to school go to school and those who work are working, so please feel relieved.”

She also describes how she and her husband are busily weaving

pandanus products to sell to the soldiers in Waikīkī. These *lauhala* goods were popular souvenir items. It is also time for them to harvest their “kibi,” or sugar cane, she relates. Furthermore, of news she had received in a letter from Mr. Araishi, she has this to say:

I read the postcard from Japan you had enclosed, and we were very shocked. Your family must feel very lonely losing your mother and one of your two oijō [nephews?] by the atomic bomb and another in the war. We send our sincere sympathy.

In this letter, she informs Mr. Araishi of what had happened to various members of her family (somehow, they must have all known each other, or had come from the same area in Japan): “I was told that my elder sister who had married into the Furutake family passed away three years ago. This family also lost a younger son in the atomic bomb,” she notes regretfully.

Of Hiroshima Prefecture, she feels saddened and beside herself that the once “prosperous” place had been “turned into grass-land [ruin].” Typically stoic and although she is very angry about the atomic bomb, she resigns herself to Japan’s fate with:

It is not enough to bite at the throats of those who dropped the atomic bomb. . . . We will have to resign ourselves to this as a crime caused by the war.

“Late March,” she goes on to say, “we sent some sugar to the Araishi, Tokugawa, and other families. I haven’t written to them yet, so I will send my sympathy to them right away.” She implores her readers:

We hear that Japan has nothing right now and [people there] can hardly live. Let’s send goods over there even little by little, and console them. We sent everything from old clothes to old shoes. I will write more in my next letter. Please take care of yourselves.

On the following day, my grandmother writes to those of the Araishi family living in Japan. Impassioned, expressive, and eloquent, my grandmother’s tone changes considerably:

Greetings.

For a long time there was an embargo on correspondence, but since September 10 of last year, we have been permitted to send out parcels with a postcard attached; since January 2 of this year, letters; and now return postcards.

My grandmother explains why she did not write to them: "During this long time, we lived with anxiety, in this foreign land. We always prayed for Japan. . . ." Speaking as though she and her family were visitors in some foreign country—*tabi no takoku*—her comments sound strange, especially since this letter was written more than 33 years after she had come to Hawai'i. Perhaps, she was speaking only for herself, for she always felt like an outsider in Hawai'i; perhaps too, because she never wanted to come to Hawai'i in the first place. While what she really felt is undecipherable, her remarks show the moral complexity, the dilemma of people like her who still had strong family ties in Japan. For every person, like my grandmother, who was ambivalent about her ties to Japan and America, there were those like my grandfather who wanted to have nothing to do with Japan.

It may have been that she also wanted to spare the feelings of those living in Japan. She probably did not want them to think the families supported America or had assimilated so easily. As Mutsuyo says, it was ironic that she found herself lucky to be in Hawai'i during and after the War. My grandmother had written that most Japanese in Hawai'i were treated quite well, had plenty of food, and were even economically "better off" than before. At the same time, it was difficult to act as though she were extremely satisfied about her situation with conditions so bad in Japan. It would have been impolite to make such overtures of delight and contentment in the face of other people's suffering.

While the Japanese on the continental United States, especially those interned, suppressed their feelings and internalized them, the situation here was a little different. In Hawai'i, the government was more tolerant toward the Japanese. This is not to say that my grandmother or those like her were sympathizers. Many of them did not care much about the politics of war; it was just that they loved and cared deeply for their families in Japan.

She then describes how some of the Japanese in Hawai'i reacted when Japan lost the war. Again, how much of the feeling portrayed is true or not is not readily known:

... so when we heard on the radio at last the sad and pitiful news that [Japan] had to declare the end of the war because of the atomic bombs, we fellow Japanese on all the Hawaiian islands cried very hard. We fellow Japanese in Hawaii are not despised by foreigners and keep good relationships with them in general.

My grandmother sends her sympathy regarding the deaths incurred by the Araishi family and talks about a visit by mutual relatives: "Last October, four Araishi sisters of Oahu kindly came to visit the island of Hawaii so we talked, did sightseeing, and had a good time." She also inquires about some sugar she sent:

Late March we sent some sugar to you. As soon as you receive it, please let us know. We sent the same to the families of Tokugawa and Furutake and to Gohachi's [house], so please ask them to let us know upon receipt.

On closing, she apologizes by saying, "we feel sorry for your expensive postage" and sends her best regards.

My grandmother writes her fifth letter to Araishi Eijirō, Ryūzō's (younger?) brother who was living in Japan. It is unknown when the letter was written, but it must have been after July 5, 1947, for she mentions this date:

Beautiful spring has gone, and scorchingly hot summer is here. Choosing cool places in the mountain, by the sea, or in the fields, women are busy washing and resewing winter clothes, washing and resewing futon [bedding], and so on; and men are busy cutting grass on the mountains. In the vegetable gardens, Japanese vegetables such as takana, chisa, cucumbers, pumpkins, and eggplants are sweet and delicious. When Japan's present condition—particularly the families of Araishi, Tokugawa, and Furutake in the neighborhood of Kiri-hara; and all the neighboring areas [of Kiri-hara]—come to my mind slowly like a revolving lantern, I frequently yearn for my homeland and feel sad.

On July 5, I received your letter which had been mailed on May 14. [Thank you very much for] letting me know about Kirihara, which I did not know anything about for six years. I had been wondering how the Tokugawas were. So both of them had passed away. They lived to their ripe ages; and living beings die and objects eventually fall apart as Buddhist priests always say; so, they must be in the bosom of venerable Buddha in the heaven.

My grandmother continues, “My, you are old, aren’t you Ejirō-san?” Ejirō wrote to my grandmother and probably told her how old he was. Therefore, she was surprised at his age, which provokes the following comment:

We are all getting old here too. My husband’s hair is all white, and his teeth are all false. He often complains that his foot or back hurts. He is already sixty years old. I am 53. . . .

Of this letter, Mutsuyo notes that my grandmother must have known Ejirō quite well. Either he was younger than she was, or she somehow felt tenderly toward him. The tone is friendly and sweet. It is as if she were talking to him, using the informal *yo* and *koto* ending in the text which indicates her friendliness and femininity. This is also her most conversational letter.

The rest of the letter to Ejirō profiles her family living in Hawai‘i. She writes that her “oldest daughter” (my mother) was 31 years old at the time and married to Asayama Yoshinori. They married in 1939, just before the War. Of my father, she says that he worked as a “service manager of Kitagawa Garage.” They also had “two children: ages 6 and 4,” meaning my sister and me. Her second daughter, 29, was also married and had three children. This daughter and her husband, Shigeoka Minoru, married in 1941, and he was working as an “office manager in a hospital.”

Of her third daughter, my Aunt Miyoko, my grandmother adds that she was not yet married, had learned dressmaking “for over a year,” and is working at a “dressmaker’s in Honolulu.” This girl, she also declares, was “struck by a tsunami” that occurred on April 1, 1946. What she means is that this aunt almost drowned in a *tsunami* (tidal wave) disaster. She was living with my

parents in Hilo town, near the bay, when a *tsunami* struck and washed our house away—the result of an earthquake in the Aleutian Islands. This aunt saved my life, while she almost lost hers. As many as 159 people died that day.

Of the rest of the family, she recounts that her “fourth daughter Tokie, 19, graduated from high school in June. She wanted to become a nurse,” but grandmother discloses that “it did not work out.” Of the rest of the children, the boy, Itaru, is 12 years old, and Sumiko, her youngest daughter, is 11 years old, both of whom are still going to school.

In this letter, too, she talks about a visit to Hilo by Eijirō’s brother, Ryūzō, of O’ahu. Of his visit she says:

We did not see each other for 30 years so we talked about all sorts of things. . . . Being relatives is so nice. They can talk to each other very comfortably. He also said that you, his younger brother, and others in Japan must feel very lonely, losing sons [one in the atomic bomb and one in the war].

This letter ends abruptly, and it appears she did not draft the closing.

In the sixth letter of the series, also probably written in 1947, my grandmother writes to a cousin—her mother’s older brother’s son (this letter had to be written to her mother’s side of the family because my grandfather had no brothers, only a sister)—who was older than she was and lived in Japan. Of all the letters drafted, this is one of just two letters written to someone other than her husband’s relatives:

Thank you very much for your letter. I did not hear from you for quite a long time and I appreciated your long-awaited letter. I had been worried [about your family] day and night. So Uncle [her mother’s older brother, his father] had passed away. You must feel lonely now. I send my deep sympathy. I thank him very much for all the help he gave me when he was still alive. I think that you [an older male relative in her generation] were lucky that you went home from America before the war. If you had been in America during the War, you would have been held in a camp for a long time, and what you had accumulated in 30-40 years would have

been destroyed. I hear that although those who were in America went back home to the places where they had lived after being released, things were not the same and they are now in a miserable state.

My grandmother is speaking very generally about Japanese who were interned. During the War, two of her brothers and their families who lived in Santa Rosa, California, were interned at Crystal City, Texas. But their circumstances, aside from the degradation, were somewhat different than from what she describes in her letter. Unlike many of the Japanese who lost everything, her brothers' lands and properties were given back to them intact. Caucasian friends and neighbors held and worked their lands until my grandmother's brothers and their families returned.

"Luckily," she continues, "in Hawai'i, nothing particular happened to us. On the contrary, many made a fortune in the war economy. It was such an economic boom." Hawai'i was still a Territory, and American troops were assigned to rest and recuperate here as well as to gather here before deployment to the South or Western Pacific. She says, "Because soldiers came from America, the economy was so good. These days the price for sugar cane is better. Since the minimum wage was set at 70 cents per hour, life has been so so." In closing, my grandmother asks about someone she had known and sends her regards to that person. She also tells the letter's recipient that she would write more in some other letter and wishes that they "live happily" under the circumstances.

My grandmother then writes to another person, this time possibly an uncle or cousin named Taniguchi Satoru, living in Japan. The year is, perhaps, still 1947; like the rest of the letters, this one is not dated. She states that she was "relieved to hear more about Japan" and to find that he had been fine: "For the first time," she exclaims, "I was able to know the details of your elder sister: she had passed away after only a week's illness." Of this woman she reflects: "She must have died feeling lonely. She spent her life taking good care of [father-in-law?] during [his] illness, so although feeling lonely, she must have died with a warm feeling. My husband says that he wanted to see her once more." Her uncle (the

man she had been talking about), my grandmother implies, was a difficult person. Because he was the way he was, it must have been such that this woman “lived a hard life,” she speculates and sympathizes.

Again, grandmother speaks about her situation in Hawai‘i, stating that she and my grandfather’s lives were “better these days” because the economy is good, wages fair, and sugar cane prices at “\$6.10 to \$6.50 per ton.”

Usually, harvests occurred every two to three years. In either 1946 or 1947, when my grandparents cut their cane, I remember them making as much as \$4,000. After their debts were paid (especially at the plantation store), they saved some of this money. At this particular time, with the rest of their earnings they indulged a bit and bought an American style sofa and some chairs for their living room. Nevertheless, she asserts that the “cost of living is up at the same time,” and in her estimation, it was “1.5 times higher than before the war.” Some things are as much as “5 times more expensive,” she laments, and life “tougher” than when the war was on. These are contradictory statements but indicative of the ambivalent reactions to her life.

In similar manner as before, she updates this person on the status of her family. She lists the names of her six children and their ages, jobs, education, and her grandchildren. She then closes with a standard salutation by saying, “Please take care of yourself in this hot weather.” This letter ends the series written soon after the War.

The last letter she drafted in the journal was sent to someone most likely living on O‘ahu. What year or who the recipient was are not readily known. It may be, too, that she never sent this letter. In an aggrieved state, perhaps because her life had not worked out as planned, she writes:

Although I haven’t heard from you for quite a while and have been worried and wondering whether something has happened, I have been unable to inquire (write) to you for a while as my handwriting is poor, and on top of that, I am getting old. Please forgive me.

How have you and your family been? As for me, I have been so-

Copies of some famous religious Japanese poems are also included, as well as cost accounts of what the family sold and bought. "A Spindryer washing machine," bought on April 9, 1951, for instance, "cost as much as two hundred and twenty-four dollars" she marvels. What anthuriums, orchids, even maiden-hair fern sold for, and to whom these flowers were sold, are all written in the notebook. She even includes eclectic statistics. One interesting set compares the heights of Aloha Tower and the Empire State Building with seven of Kilauea Crater's eruptions, of which the highest fountainings were recorded at nearly 1,700 feet. She notes that the first eruption was as high as, and the fountaining of the third eruption even higher than the Empire State building.

My grandmother visited Japan several times during her life, and she always went without my grandfather because he felt he could not spare the money. My grandmother visited Japan once in the 1920s, again in 1939, with and her last and most impressionable trip around 1964. This last visit turned out disappointingly. She came back to Hawai'i feeling disillusioned and that she had no real "home." Things had changed in Japan, and she had too much history in Hawai'i. While she always had a love affair with Japan, she was never able to reconcile the different emotions she felt toward her two countries. In 1954, when Japanese immigrants were allowed to become naturalized American citizens, I recall her studying diligently for her citizenship exams. She never took the oath, although I do recall her memorizing all of the Presidents of the United States and the Preamble to the Constitution. But because of the ambivalence she always felt regarding her two countries, she never became naturalized.

Eventually, during the 70s, my mother took in my grandmother to live with her in Hilo. Later, after several strokes left her bedridden, she was admitted to Hilo's Life Care Center. She died at age 85 in 1980.